

## **NICE (Northern Wisconsin ILS Consortium Exploration) Team Report - May 26, 2023**

### **Project Background/Review**

Northern Waters Library Service (NWLS) and Wisconsin Valley Library Service (WVLS) are collaborating to engage in a comprehensive joint ILS consortium exploration project to determine value and feasibility of an ILS merger between our two systems and respective ILS consortia. NWLS and WVLS applied for and received LSTA funding for this project and are working with WILS consultants to guide the process.

Team members selected NICE (Northern Wisconsin ILS Consortium Exploration) as a project name, and a [website is available](#). The website includes meeting minutes, a listing of team members, documents, timelines, FAQs and more.

### **Project Goals/Outcomes**

This is, in many ways, a feasibility study that will uncover and document potential advantages and disadvantages of an ILS merger and is not a decision-making process. [A full list of project goals and outcomes is available on the NICE project website.](#)

### **Project Update**

The NICE team met monthly in January and February. During Phase I, Development of Foundational Principles, the team discussed [communications plan](#), [project goals & outcomes](#), ongoing ILS consortium research, and began work on an upcoming stakeholder survey. The Team also reviewed initial reports about past collaboration efforts in Project WIN and information on similar successful ILS mergers. More details will be shared when the reports are complete.

The NICE Team is actively working on Phase II: Information Gathering.

- Review of past efforts to merge ILS consortia including Project WIN
- Review of ILS budgets
- Research into other consortium and shared ILS mergers
- Stakeholder survey
- Focus group meetings
- Identify key themes from the data and information gathered

The team contributed to survey questions and design, continued to review information on similar successful ILS mergers, and began working on potential focus group questions. A draft report of past efforts to merge ILS consortia including Project WIN is in progress.

The NICE project survey was open from January 16-27 and 117 responses were received. Focus group meetings for member library directors and staff, and for library system staff took place the week of February 27. There was great representation of library directors, staff and library system staff from both systems.

The NICE Team met on Tuesday, March 21 to receive a data report on the stakeholder survey. A [recording](#) of the survey results presentation and a [one page summary](#) are available on the [NICE Libraries website](#). The Team also discussed ideas on the best communication tools to share information with libraries, staff and boards.

The NICE Team met on Tuesday, April 18 to review and discuss all collected data to identify overarching themes and ideas. The Team also discussed the creation of a decision making tool and rubric to guide next steps. Work has begun on the development of an executive summary and overall report that will identify concerns and barriers to a merged ILS, benefits of a merged integrated library system, and the conditions that make a merged ILS desirable.

The NICE Team met on Tuesday, May 16 to review and discuss an executive summary for the final report, and develop decision making principles for the next stage should system boards approve of the NICE project moving forward. The Team also began discussing potential next steps and an order of priority for those steps. More information about the NICE project is available on the [NICE Libraries website](#).

### **Questions are Welcome!**

V-Cat and NWLN library staff are welcome to share their questions and concerns via an [online form](#). Answers will be shared on the [NICE Libraries FAQ page](#).

### **NICE Team Members**

- Alexander Johnson, Marathon County Public Library Support Services Manager
- Gina Rae, NWLS Database and Support Specialist
- Jackee Johnson, NWLS ILS Administrator
- Katie Zimmermann, WVLS ILS Administrator
- Molly Lank-Jones, Hayward Library Director
- Peggy O'Connell, Minocqua Library Director
- Rachel Metzler, WVLS Database and Support Specialist
- Sue Heskin, Superior Library Director
- Tammie Blomberg, Rib Lake Library Director
- Teresa Schmidt, Mercer Library Director

Report prepared by K. Zimmermann and J. Johnson on 5/26/2023